COMIC SHOP NEWS™

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Crow : City of Angles ™ & ©1996 James O'Barr, AKK.

Kitchen Sink Has Plenty to Crow About

Crow fans have had plenty to crow about so far in 1996—after all the year has thus far brought not one, but two original ***Crow*** miniseries. But the Crow-fest really kicks into gear this summer, with the release of a second film, a comic book adaptation of that film, a new trading card series, and a veritable plethora of Crow-related posters, pins, medallions, t-shirts, mugs, and more.

Two years ago, James O'Barr's ***The Crow*** came to film in a noir-styled drama starring the late Brandon Lee; this year, Vincent Perez takes on the challenging role of the moody, sepulchral antihero, joined by Mia Kirshner (who plays the grown-up Sarah) and Iggy Pop (as the villainous Curve). This Crow is Ashe Corven, who was murdered—along with his son—but a villainous group of drug dealers led by the depraved Judah Earl. Now The Crow is back to avenge his son's death—and he's called on the now-grown Sarah, the former child-friend of the first Crow, to help him complete his mission.

The Crow: City of Angels tells the story of the Ashe Corven Crow's mission of vengeance against Nemo, Spidermonkey, Curve, Kali, and Judah Earl. The three-issue comic book adaptation is written by John Wagner and illustrated by Dean Ormston; each issue is available with an illustrated cover featuring art by The Dredetwin or a photo cover depicting a scene from the film. ***The Crow: City of Angels #1***, priced at $2.95 in either cover edition, is slated for mid-July release.

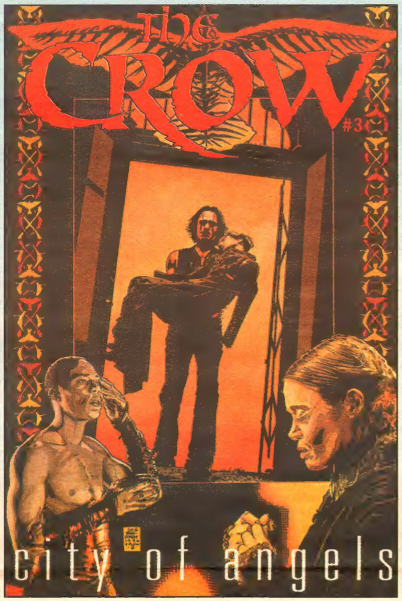
Shortly before the early August release of the film, Kitchen Sink will also release ***The Crow: City of Angels Trading Cards.*** The ninety-card series will feature a mixture of photo cards depicting scenes from the film, ten embossed cards featuring art by such talents as Kelley Jones, Kevin O'Neill, and Chris Moeller, one of ten temporary tattoos, a rare chase set of six Crow-mium cards featuring art by Crow creator James O'Barr, and a super-rare chase card depicting Sarah's painting from the film. Each eight-card pack carries a $1.75 pricetag.

For Crow completists, ***The Crow: City of Angels—A Diary of the Film*** is a must-have. This $15.95 128-page trade paperback offers a complete behind-the-scenes look at the making of this second film; the text is supplemented by over two hundred illustrations and photos in black and white. James O'Barr and the stars of the film are also interviewed in this fascinating volume; look for it in July.

Want still more? Howsabout a series of t-shirts depicting characters and images from the film ($15.95@), or a series of keychains ($2.99-$4.99@), or numerous patches ($3.95@), or a variety of photo posters ($6.95@), or a selection of caps ($18.95@), or packs of temporary tattoos ($3.00@), or mugs ($7.99@), or stickers ($5.99@), or even an uncut set of trading cards ($40)? All this and more is available through Kitchen Sink for the Crow aficionado.

Comics, books, cards, posters, pins, keychains, and more—with an assortment of Crow comics and tie-in merchandise like this, fans will have even more reason to flock to the comic shops this summer!

by KIM B. PEARSON



Nightwing: Superheroing's in His Blüd

He's been a kid acrobat, a costumed hero sidekick, the leader of a teen superteam, and a fill-in for the Batman—but now Dick Grayson, aka Nightwing, is ready to venture out on his own... and that means not just a new direction in his life, but a new home as well. So Nightwing says so long to Gotham City and heads off to a new city, the ominously-named Blüdhaven, where he discovers that Gotham isn't the only city rife with corruption and threatened by evil.

Why Blüdhaven? Simple: the town doesn't have a costumed hero of its own. But that doesn't mean that the power structure of the town is particularly eager to have a local hero; in fact, they're perfectly happy with the hero-less status quo. So when Nightwing tries to shut down the criminal activities of the Blackmask gang, he discovers that the police and the politicos are just as unhappy with his presence as the criminals!

Blüdhaven isn't Gotham... but it is close enough to the famous bat-town that a number of familiar villains and guest stars will make an appearance in the new series. In fact, one frequent visitor to the comic book is the teen who has picked up the Robin mantle in Dick Grayson's absence; after all, he does have a lot that he can learn from the first Robin...

Nightwing is written by Batman veteran Chuck Dixon; the art for the series is supplied by Scott McDaniel (well known for his acclaimed work on ***Daredevil*** and ***Elektra***) and Karl Story. ***Nightwing #1***, a $1.95 comic, is scheduled for August 7th release.

by CLIFF BIGGERS

COMIC SHOP NEWS™
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From Your Friendly Neighborhood Comics Outlet
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Onslaught Goes Universal

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Thus far, the focus of Onslaught's attack has been in the various Marvel mutant titles—but in Onslaught: Marvel Universe, the second wave of defenders steps forward... the combined power of the Avengers, the Fantastic Four, the Incredible Hulk, and other heroes. Separately, they've saved Earth from such threats as Galactus, Terrax, Loki, and the Maestro... but will even their combined might be enough to stop Onslaught from rebuilding the world to his own standards?

Onslaught: Marvel Universe, written by *Scott Lobdell & Mark Waid* and illustrated by *Adam Kubert & Dan Green*, paves the way for one of the most amazing changes introduced into the Marvel Universe in many years. This 48-page climactic battle will pave the way for a new direction for Captain America, the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, and the Avengers—and its surprising conclusion will have Marvel fans talking for months. This isn't just another slugfest—it's history in the making! ***Onslaught: Marvel Universe***, a $3.95 comic, is scheduled for August 7th release.

COMIC SHOP NEWS
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Snarf! Snarf!

Do you miss the old days of underground comics, when creators pushed the limits of the medium with a variety of offbeat stories, told in a mixture of traditional and experimental styles? Well, this ***Snarf***'s for you! ***Snarf #16***, the latest issue of the long-running comic seen by many as one of the few true descendants of the underground movement, features an assortment of cutting-edge comics by such acclaimed creators as *Jim Woodring* (who touches on the horrible social problem of violence to chickens), *Cowboy Henk* (whose life takes some very surprising turns), *Brad Johnson* (who decides that the bees are the bees' knees), and *Mac White* (who takes a look at history). *Mark Landman* supplies the cover of the 32-page black and white comic. ***Snarf #16***, a $2.95 comic, is scheduled for mid-August release—and as you might have suspected, this one is intended for mature readers.

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CSNsider

The comics field has lost another of its giants: *Curt Swan*, the man whose art epitomized Superman for the better part of three decades, died over the weekend of June 15th. Swan, a master of emotion as well as dynamic design, was best known for his work on Superman family titles, ***Legion of Super-Heroes***, and ***World's Finest*** in the 1960's; he continued to work for DC, contributing to various DC titles in the past few months. His contribution to the Silver Age of comics ranks alongside the contributions of such talents as Jack Kirby... Now here's a team-up no one expected: in September, one of the Image tough guys ventures into the Dark Horse Universe in the ***Grifter & the Mask*** two-issue limited series by *Steven T. Seagle, Luciano Lima*, and *José Pimentel*... Following that in late '96 or early '97 will be a ***WetWorks/Predator*** limited series... The new creative team for ***The Incredible Hulk,*** beginning this fall, is *Peter David* and *Mike Deodato Jr.*... The new animated ***Superman*** TV series debuts in prime time on the WB Network Friday September 6th, with a special movie presentation; the weekly series begins its Saturday morning run the next day, at 10 a.m. on September 7th... London Night Studios has sold a 50% stake in the company to Ministry of Film, which now has the rights to adapt London Night's characters and concepts to film, television, and other media. This also gives London Night the rights to develop comics and trading cards for such Ministry of Film projects as ***Embrace of the Vampire*** and the HBO series ***Erotic Confessions***... Marvel Comics and *Harry Abrams* have a second coffee table book, ***Marvel Universe*** in the works, described by Marvel as "an elaborate character driven text written by former Marvel Archivist *Peter Sanderson*. Each chapter explores a different character group, art style, and era of character development."... Curious as to why no one announced the Gen13 cameo in Crusade Comics' ***Atomik Angels #1***? "There were a couple of reasons why we didn't play this up before now," publisher *Bill Tucci* said. "The first was that I wanted ***Atomik Angels*** to sell on its own merits. The second reason is that I didn't want it to be seen as part of the crossover mania that seems to be sweeping the industry..." Byron Preiss Multimedia is producing CD-ROM novel adaptations based on ***Spider-Man: Venom Factor*** and ***Spider-Man: Day of Reckoning***, both are slated for late '96 release... And speaking of Byron Preiss, the company plans to over print versions of its virtual comics beginning this fall... Cloud 9 Interactive has a new CD-ROM title, ***How to Be a Marvel Artist,*** debuting this fall... And Gryphon Software Corporation has reached an agreement with Warner Bros. Interactive and DC Comics to produce children's CD-ROM software titles based on ***The Adventures of Batman and Robin*** and the ***Superman*** animated series. "This new Activity Center venture represents an entirely new way for children to enjoy and even learn from their favorite DC Comics superheroes," *Holly Stein*, VP of Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, said... *Steven Spielberg* and Amblin Entertainment plan to produce a live action version of the *Dr. Seuss* children's classic ***The Cat in the Hat***... A ***Gen-13*** miniseries is in the development stages; this series will fill in the gaps between ***Team 7*** and ***Gen13***... Daredevil and Shi are slated to cross paths in early '97... *George Pérez, Ron Lim*, and *Terry Austin* take the humor trail with their ***Superman/Silver Surfer*** crossover story, which pits the pair against the offbeat villainy of Mr. Mxyzptlk and the Impossible Man... Among the combinations in the next Amalgam Comics extravaganza are a Green Lantern/Iron Man amalgam called Iron Lantern... The Comic Café has cited *Tom Brevoort* as reporting that Marvel and Image are producing a ***Spider-Man/Gen13*** crossover and than *Scott McDaniel* is replacing *Lee Weeks* as the penciller of the *Dan Chichester*-written ***Batman/Daredevil*** crossover... *Lou Ferrigno* reprises his role as the Hulk when he supplies the voice for the greenskinned goliath in UPN's upcoming ***Incredible Hulk*** animated series; *Neil McDonough* will supply the voice for Bruce Banner, *Luke Perry* will do the Rick Jones honors, *Genie Francis* will voice Betty Ross, and *Matt Frewer* will handle the voice of The Leader. A ***Hawaii Five-O*** film starring *Willem Dafoe*? That's the latest rumor making the rounds...

STEFAN PETRUCHA

Stefan Petrucha is known to most fans for his brilliant work on Topps Comics' The X-Files—but many readers aren't aware that X-Files is just one of many projects written by Petrucha in his seven years in the comics field. That's almost understandable, though, since much of his earlier work either didn't appear in print, appeared in print only after lengthy delays, or was largely overlooked on the racks. That's hardly the case any more, though: since Petrucha made X-Files Topps' biggest-selling comic and one of the most popular TV adaptations in this decade, his work always attracts attention. Later this year, Petrucha is taking his talents to a new project, The Bandy Man; he recently took some time to talk with CSN about his career, his new series, and future comic plans.

How did you get started in comics? You began at First, didn't you?

Squalor came first, from First in 1989, then ***Meta-4***—both of which really reflect my anomaly-interests. Then there was ***Counterparts*** from Tundra, which no one probably remembers, then ***Lance Barnes: Post-Nuke Dick*** from Epic, which is currently being packaged as a cable series with Matt Frewer attached as the star. ***Nexus the Liberator***, which was written for First, finally came out from Dark Horse.

What happened next wasn't so much that I was out of comics, I continued to earn money writing, but a vast majority of my material went unpublished. First went out of business, I did eight issues of a ***Geek*** series for DC that was never published, wrote for Majestic which went under, did an adaptation of ***The Last Action Hero*** which was never published, and so on and so on. There was a point where 70% of the comic book material I'd written and been paid for was not published.

Then ***Duckman*** and ***The X-Files*** shifted that balance.

You have a series, Bandy Man, coming up from Caliber; this series reunites the entire X-Files team. Had you been planning to do this series before you left X-Files?

The Bandy Man is something I've been trying to get published for years. Every publisher I approached thought the story was terrific and that "someone" really should publish it - someone meaning someone else. Happily, Caliber Press has turned out to be that someone else. It's a project I believe in very strongly, and I'm delighted that my success on the ***X-Files*** comic has given me the leverage to attract artists like Charles, Miran and Jill.

What's the basic premise of Bandy Man?

The story is about an unfinished man—abandoned by God during the moment of his creation, condemned to be forever incomplete. Enraged by his lack of connection to the godhead, he loathes all Creation and desires only to see it undone.

It's told in three parts. The first takes place in Ancient Judea—it's an interview between a Redactor, or editor/scribe, whose been sent to collect the spoken folk tales of the many tribes of Judea, and Havah, a condemned woman, a story-teller. She's to be put to death for her blasphemous stories, notably the tale of the Bandy Man, which is essentially an alternate version (possibly the original version) of the creation story in Genesis. The Redactor's duty is to discern whether or not her tale is divinely inspired. In any event, she is to be put to death.

The second part takes place in the present day, where a young, disenchanted, alcoholic photographer learns that his brother may be a descendant of the original Bandy Man—now hell-bent on fulfilling his desire to undo the great work of Creation.

The third part is the story discussed by Havah and the Redactor—an alternate version of Genesis, in which Adam is not the first man.

Now, one might ask, how exactly does a character in a story go about having descendants? Well, that would depend on whether the story were true or not, no?

One of the issues central to the Bandy Man is—who controls the narrative, essentially a narrative of the self and its relation to the world? The condemned story-teller? The Redactor? The alcoholic photographer? Or could it be the Bandy Man himself? I'm hoping the final result will be something people will enjoy reading more than once in order to pick up on all the nuances.

Comics have always had an unusual relationship with religion—at least with surviving religions. How did you decide to make a religious theme so prominent in Bandy Man?

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same as it never was

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Not sure what you mean by an "unusual" relationship. I don't know that television, film, literature or art have an *any* more "usual" relationship with religion, unless you're talking about that very small, intolerant branch of any religion that preaches "I know the one truth and you have to believe exactly what I believe or you are condemned" - and it's impossible for *anyone* to have a usual relationship with them.

Anyway, I didn't sit down and say, hey I want to do a story about religion. In fact, ***The Bandy Man*** is more directly about identity and creation than about religion, *per se*.

What happened was, about three or four years ago, I was looking for a little emotional and intellectual stimulation, so I decided to start taking some college classes. One of the classes I took was ***The Bible As Literature***, wonderfully taught by Lee Schlesinger, who is now graciously providing the supplemental text pieces for ***The Bandy Man***.

I'm a student of literature, and my primary relationship to the Bible is as a piece of text. In other words, while I did come to it with numerous preconceptions, it was not, to me, of necessity or up-bringing, the one true word of God.

That said, I do believe that the Bible is *the* seminal text—or rather, texts—of modern Western civilization. I believe that the stories, poems, histories, etc., in it to a large extent define our thought processes, identity, and culture on a very deep, often invisible level.

One of the many things that struck me about the Bible during the course of the class was the continual presence of two distinct and powerful themes, which for the sake of argument I'll call the urge to create and the urge to regulate. It's clear in the Book that both are necessary to life, but in a proper balance.

If the urge to create overwhelms, creativity can devolve into chaos. If the urge to regulate dominates, it devolves into static sterility. Both urges can devolve into cruelty. And that, among a zillion other things I learned in that class, inspired ***The Bandy Man***—a fictionalized version of the origin of that creation/regulation dialogue, how it presents itself in an alternate Genesis story, and ultimately how it overtly and covertly makes its presence felt in the present day.

Given the theme, it's also about rule and passion, editors and creators, the written versus the spoken word and dozens of other obvious and not-so-obvious pairings.

Comics have, for the most part, either avoided religion or have had an almost antagonistic relationship, it seems.

Hey, what about Marvel's ***Life of John Paul*** or ***Mother Theresa?*** Or DC's Bible stories? Or that House of Mystery story—"The Dirty Job"?

I suppose it comes down to definitions. Sadly, "religion" seems to have taken on the same meaning as "organized religion" or even "fundamental religion" - and art has always had a tense relationship with them (the status quo representing the urge to regulate). I think that misuse gives religion, which is really a multi-faceted part of human existence, a bad name.

In a broader sense, a preferable sense, I think, one's religion is one's belief system, and many comics have dealt with that. Good and Evil in the superhero world is practically Zorastrianism. Stan Lee often borrowed from ***Paradise Lost***. Sandman certainly dealt with belief systems—heck, it had its own living gods.

Comics tend to drift into the dualistic faiths like Zoroastrianism from time to time...

Well, *every* comic universe has addressed the God issue one way or another (as in ***Books of Magic*** or ***Crisis*** or the higher-powered characters in Marvel's universe)—there are clear organizing and de-organizing principles at work. Naturally when you've got a huge soap opera going, you're going to try to be as inclusive as possible, so the relationship to existing religious beliefs is most often fudged, except on the basis of individuals of one faith or another. It would be really *wrong* for Marvel's world to take place in a Christian or a Hindu cosmos; that would be proselytizing, no?

art © 1996 Tim Sale/Steve Bissette/Stephen Bissette/Richard Howell

Do you suppose that the dualistic emphasis is popular because of the simplicity of the good versus evil structure?

Probably; it's simple, it's recognizable, and it's empowering - in the sense that good and evil are *equal*, which *really* gives folks free will, I mean, if evil is ultimately going to lose, it's not much of a choice, right? And that empowerment plays into the old male adolescent power fantasy.

Do you think it's odd that comic book creators and filmmakers are denied the freedom that novelists have had for years?

Nah—it's pop culture. In fact, pop novels don't have the kind of freedom you're talking about and independent or artsy comics *do*. It's a situation inherent in any attempt to appeal to most people.

Do you anticipate any reader reaction to the religious content?

I think those people who are offended by the notion of religion being described as mythology underestimate—or at least under-value—myth. To my mind, a myth is a shared, authorless story that generates meaning. In that sense, all religions have their myths, and I don't see anything offensive about it. To say that something is mythic isn't saying it's not true, in fact it's one way of saying it has a higher truth.

I tried to handle the themes with respect, so I don't think that anyone who isn't offended by an open dialogue will be offended by ***The Bandy Man***. I'm sure there will be some reaction. I do hope it will generate a healthy discussion.

In the first issue of ***The X-Files*** I dealt with the Fatima Prophecy and presented the theory that the BVM visitation was caused by a UFO. I didn't present it as the "one truth" just as a possibility — and most people took it that way. Sure, I received maybe one or two letters saying you should never show an alien and an angel together, but the vast majority who expressed their opinion, many of them devout Catholics, were intrigued by the information I presented and not offended at all.

I think we underestimate religious consciousness. I think those who are comfortable with their beliefs don't mind an honest question or two.

Is The Bandy Man a finite series, or will it continue as long as you have a readership for it?

The Bandy Man is, of definition, a single story. There are however elements in it which could appear in other stories, but I have no plans to write them at this time.

Doesn't the very nature of the Bandy man's existence—the fact that he has existed for so long—offer an incredible number of story possibilities?

The problem is that the very nature of the Bandy Man's existence offers *one* story. I might be able to tell it a few different ways, but it would still, inevitably be the same story.

Miran Kim does some stunning cover work; any chance we'll see some Miran Kim interiors for either of these series?

Glad you asked. The second issue of ***The Bandy Man***, the alternate creation story, is rendered entirely by Miran. Given both Miran's talents and the fact that she is culturally unfamiliar with Genesis, I can't wait to see what sort of images she comes up with. Her first cover is already breath-taking.

How'd you entice Miran Kim to do interior work?

I said, "Hey, Miran, want to draw this?" And she said, "sure!"

Well, it wasn't *quite* that easy. At first, she was a little thrown by the script. As a non-Judeo-Christian she'd actually never heard much about the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve and such, except perhaps in passing. I thought this was a great opportunity to give "fresh eyes" to the story, so to speak. The section she's drawing is, after all, an early, alternate version of Genesis - and what better way to convey that than through artistic eyes that are seeing it for the first time? After I said something like that to her, she agreed.

As for how it looks, I do know she plans on using a different style than her mixed media covers, but as of this moment, I haven't seen any of her interior pages yet.

I do fully expect to be blown away.

The concept of Bandy Man seems at least partly influenced by dualistic faiths and apocryphal literature. Is that just the impression you were trying to create, or is it truly an influence on the series? How much research did you do?

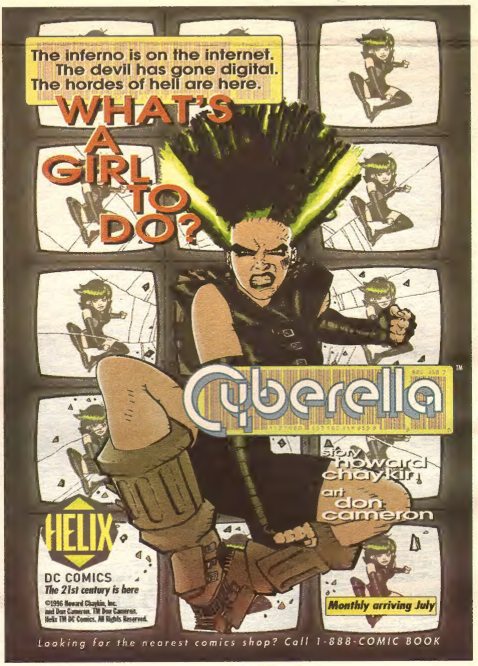
The Bandy Man is strongly grounded in my reading and understanding of the Bible as filtered through that class. It takes liberties with the history, some speculations being wilder than others, but most such stories do.

It also has a literary "father" in ***The Master and Maguerite***,, a wonderful Russian novel written, I think, in the 1920s, in which Satan comes to visit Moscow. The Rolling Stones quote it in "Sympathy For the Devil" ["Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste" are the devil's first lines, I think]. Anyway, that book is structurally based on three narratives, each of which vie for control. One is the main story about Satan, another is the "state's" story about the author of the narrative and there's a third, mythic story that takes place in hell. The structure I use in ***The Bandy Man*** was inspired by ***Master.***

Your comeback began with The X-Files. Many readers praised your X-Files work as being on a par with—if not at some times above the par of—the television series. Did you ever get any feedback from Chris Carter or other television-series-related people as to their response to the comic?

Not a word from Chris Carter directly,—and, sadly, most of what I heard from his office (well, from my editor repeating what he heard from their office) was pretty negative. I didn't get the characters. I didn't understand the show and so on...

Part of the problem, was, I believe, inherent in writing licensed material. I was putting the characters in situa-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tions and stories we'd never seen them in — and the more different I made them, the less Fox and Chris Carter's office felt it resembled the show.

As an example, we had a big clash over the ending to ***X-Files #7***, "Trepanning Opera," which concluded with an "alternate reality" of Scully plummeting to her death. They very much wanted that ending changed—for fear readers would think Scully really *was* dead.

Unfortunately, the notion that you might be experiencing a dream while in reality you're dying somewhere, was the *whole point* —to alter that ending would have been to destroy the story. To be fair, one reader actually did think Scully was dead, but the majority got the idea. Ultimately, I won that argument, and"Trepanning Opera" placed second in the British Mag's ***SFX*** poll for "Comic Story of the year" (first place went to another ***X-Files*** story, "Firebird"), so I feel a bit justified.

Aside from problems in my maintaining a resemblance to the series, they also saw it—again, understandably so—as the purview of the series itself to break new ground.

As an example of that, in ***X-Files #11***, it was originally supposed to be *Mulder* who was trying to steal the ILBAL, under the influence of mind control. I thought it was a nice turnaround, and part of the point of the story, to have Mulder in a sense become the alien he was looking for.

Since Mulder had never been under mind control on the series (at that time), the "ninja Mulder" notion, as they called it, was adamantly rejected. Since then, I believe, both Mulder and Scully have had their TV bouts with mind control. As Chris Carter's assistant Mary Astadourian explained it to me, once it was done on the show, it was okay to do it in the comic—but not before.

The TV show was also a moving target, and we were never given a clue as to what was being planned on the series. Often I would watch the show, biting my nails and praying they didn't do something that would utterly con-

tradict what I'd just spent the last month writing. Fortunately they never did.

Nonetheless, trying to keep in tune with the show also caused problems. X was supposed to appear in ***X-Files #10***, but hadn't been on the show for a while. They weren't sure what his fate was going to be and were uncomfortable with that mind-control thing again. So, they suggested I create my *own* "government informant" with whom I could do as I pleased. Hence the appearance of the mysterious blonde woman spouting X's dialogue in #10.

Unfortunately, when I tried to bring her back in ***X-Files #13*** and get a sub-plot going, they objected. "Who is this woman? She's not from the show! Why don't you just use X?" So, in #13, X appears, spouting the dialogue of the mysterious blonde woman.

And so it goes.

Personally, I think the ***X-Files*** phenomena could easily withstand multiple interpretations, but there's was an understandable, yet unfortunate, difference in view on that. My feeling is that creatively, my tenure on the book ended at just about the right time. Under the circumstance, it was becoming increasingly difficult for me to write what I considered a good story.

So, sadly, my biggest comic success thus far seems to have been well received by most everyone, except for the owners and creators of the show it was based on.

It's that old regulation/creation thing again. See? I *did* say it formed the basis of Western civilization...

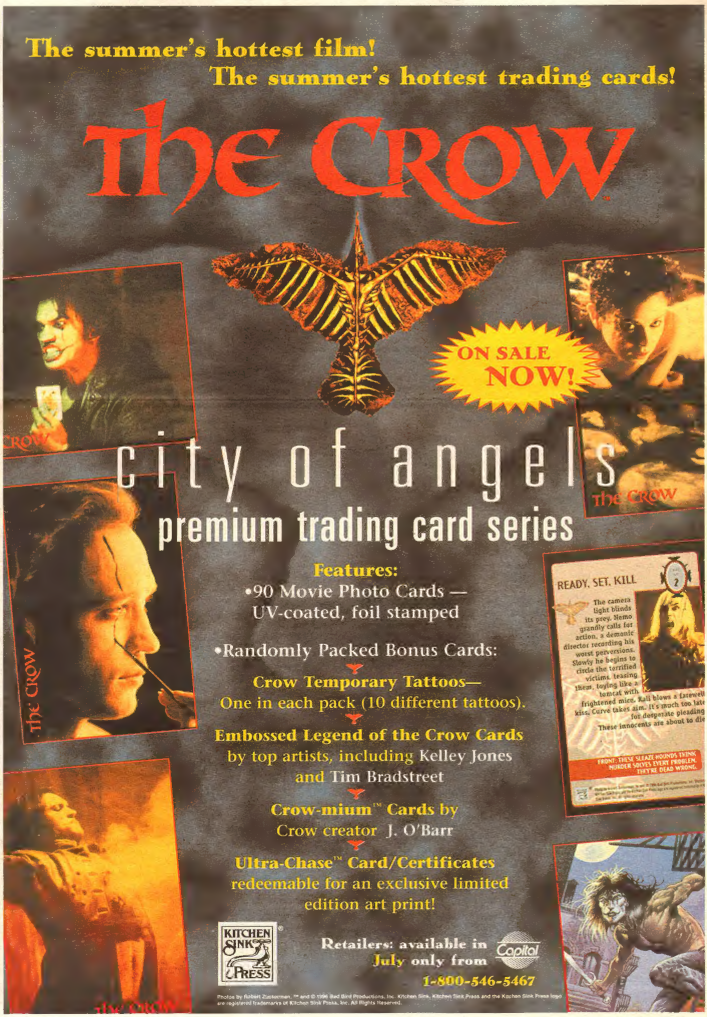
Did you ever get the feeling that the television series was moving in the same direction as your scripts, or was it totally different?

I was trying to follow their lead, since I didn't know where the hell the story was going—but there were certain directions implicit in the structure, by-roads one could explore. I kind of staked out some Fortean ground for the comic, but never really established a "direction", so much as a tone, at least not in terms of the main characters. Clearly that really was the purview of the show. I did have some things to say about the Scully/Mulder relationship, which I think I did.

There were a few points of intersection, where I maybe second-guessed what they were doing. Normally-calm Mulder punches out someone in ***X-Files #3*** long before he actually clocked someone on the show; Scully "dies" in #7 and there's a scene where Mulder "dies" in the wonderful Clyde Bruckman episode; mind control appeared in the comic first; and there were some interesting parallels between"Silent Cities of the Mind" and their cannibalism episode. We used variations on the same disease.

I never got the sense that any of the writers were actually reading the comic—in any case I never heard about it. I think when you're working with the same elements, some of the same thoughts are bound to crop up.

Did you feel that the fact that Mulder seems destined to never truly prove in the existence of aliens, the secret government, and so on, was a difficult limitation to work with?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No. That was one of the things I *liked* about working on the series: the lack of definite answers. I think, in a way, you're showing a purer form of reality when you don't offer definitive explanations for it. Once it's explained concretely, it's not reality anymore, it's somebody's view of reality. Reality is, by definition, above and beyond (pardon the pun) any and all explanations of it.

Me, I'm with that group that feels that they blew it when they established that the aliens were not only real, but stereotypical, in the sense that we've seen them before in classic sf tales. The series, to my mind, really belongs on the borderline. Of course it was bound to stray now and again, but I think it's heart should have stayed there.

I think ***The X-Files*** is shying away from anything that might directly challenge the Judeo-Christian mythos as a matter of course. Which is a shame, since Chris Carter has stated several times that he thinks the show is "about religion". I wouldn't expect to see any "Passover Plot" ***X-Files*** stories at any rate.

Not that I think there won't be any more great ***X-Files*** stories. I'm sure there will be.

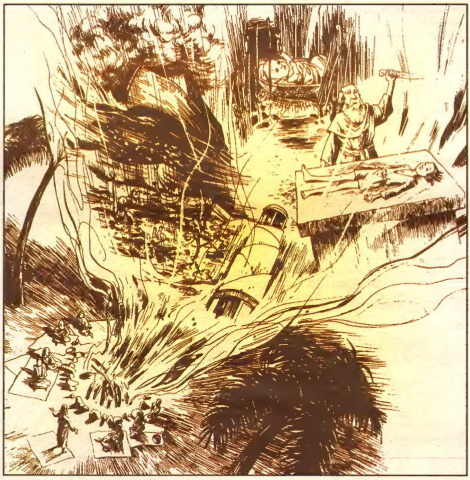
Will you be doing any X-Files work in the future?

Having the disapproval thing hanging over me was getting to be quite a burden. It was getting more and more difficult to go over to the computer and try and top my last story while trying to second-guess what their objections might be. So, I'm pretty sure the answer is no.

I do have an ***X-Files*** graphic novel, ***Afterflight***, , with art by Jill Thompson that I hope will be approved for publication sometime this year — but I really can't see doing any more work for the series.

What will you remember most about your X-Files tenure?

Easy—the feedback from the readers. There's no better



experience for a writer than to hear the dialogue generated by his stories. At it's peak, we were receiving about three hundred letters a month, from all over the globe. Now, of course, that's party due to the *huge* coat-tails we rode in on, but I like to think I had a little something to do with it....

So did you ever feel the urge to write that Mulder/autoerotic asphyxiation story?...

Every day. Still do. That one I'd come back for.

Are you working on anything else right now?

Comic-wise, Charles Adlard and I are trucking around a new series about the paranormal. I love working with Charles, and it will give me an opportunity to explore some of those border-lines I couldn't get to with the ***X-Files*** series. Any interested publisher out there reading this - drop me a line!

Tell me more about this paranormal series...

It's really too early to go into much detail. Suffice it to say where the ***The X-Files*** uses Mulder and Scully to represent two views of the paranormal, the believer and the skeptic, the new series deals with *five* perspectives.

You seem to have a genuine interest in the problematic, the unexplainable, the mysterious, and the outré. Is this something that's been an interest of yours for a long time, or has it developed in conjunction with the books you've been working on?

I was always a comic, sci-fi, fantasy fan. Then, when I was about twelve, I came across a copy of ***Chariots of the Gods***, with the bold, sacreligious banner "Was God and Astronaut?" Of course, the science in the book stinks to high heaven, and Von Daniken's notion that these poor,

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non-European cultures couldn't have possibly been smart enough to build all this stuff. Almost racist—but for me, at the time, it was a thunderbolt, a collision of worlds—a mixing of what I enjoyed in fiction and what so many people in the world believed to be real. Since then, I've been fascinated with that borderline... and that fascination has been pretty much reflected in my work.

Any other projects?

There are a few things on the burner with Topps, possibly some more licensed materials. Nothing definite yet.

I am also starting a modest video business and am knee-deep in our first production. It's called ***Really Strange Stories of the Totally Unknown***—it features satires of ***Unsolved Mysteries***, and yes, ***The X-Files***,—and a little something called ***Attack of the Balloon People***. I hope to be finished shooting by the end of the summer, and have the product on the market by the end of the year. It will be available mail order, and hopefully in comic stores. It's really a big experiment right now—so far a successful one. We'll have to see how things go.

You seem to have avoided mainstream superhero style comics: is that intentional, or has it just worked out that way?

It's just worked out that way. I think my interests lie more in variations on genre than within any genre, and I've got a body of work out now that indicates that, so I'm probably not the first name that comes up when someone mentions a superhero book.

Do you have any desires to do something in the superhero field? If so, what?

Sure—but what? I don't know. Something like ***Miracleman*** would be nice, though that's hardly mainstream. Almost anything, as long as I was given a long leash with it.

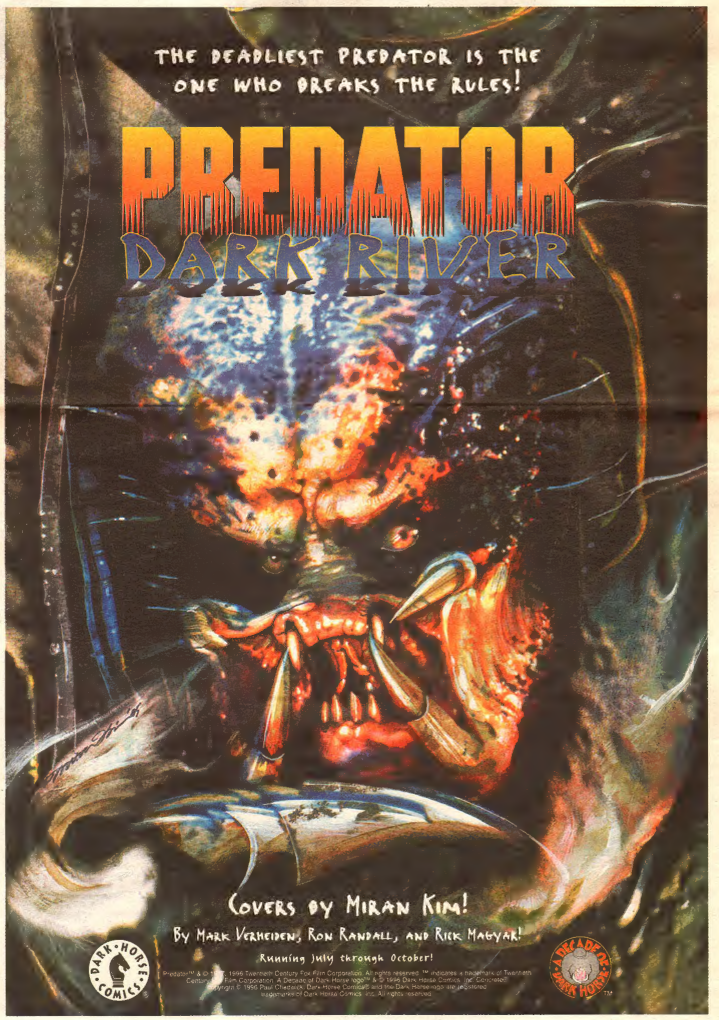
If there was any one established comic book/licensed property you could write, what would it be?

I really had that wish fulfilled with ***The X-Files***. A new dream? I dunno -lemme sleep on it. Maybe ***Doctor Strange***.

Do you feel that your future in comics is much more in the direction of creator-owned projects?

Ever since I've been in this business I've never had *any* idea what my future was going to be like, so I don't know. I prefer creator owned projects because of the freedom. Then again, I had a wonderful experience working on the ***Duckman*** comic. Time will tell.

I'd also like you to mention that I've got a little e-mailing list going for irregular updates on my projects and stuff. Anyone interested in receiving it, or just wanting to say hi, write to: 72630.446@Compuserve.com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